

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 JIDDA 00252 121526Z

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FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 696

S E C R E T JIDDA 0252

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FOR THE SECRETARY FROM THE AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS:MASS, SA

SUBJECT: SALE OF F-15'S TO SAUDI ARABIA

1. CODEL DELEGATION HEADED BY SENATOR WILLIAMS AND INCLUDING SENATORS STEVENS, RIBICOFF, CANNON AND HOLLINGS LEFT JANUARY 9 AFTER A MOST SUCCESSFUL VISIT HERE. THE VISIT WAS CLIMAXED BY TWO-HOUR MEETING WITH CROWN PRINCE FAHD ON JANUARY 8. (SEE SEPARATE TELS.) FINAL ITEM DISCUSSED WITH FAHD WAS F-15 SALE. CROWN PRINCE MADE SUPERB ARGUMENT. WHEN HE FINISHED, SENATOR RIBICOFF STATED, "YOUR ROYAL HIGHNESS, YOU HAVE WON YOUR CASE". ALL PRESENT TOOK THIS AS A COMMITMENT OF RIBICOFF TO VOTE IN FAVOR OF F-15 SALES. UPON LEAVING MEETING, RIBICOFF COMPLAINED OF VIOLENT HEADACHE AND SKIPPED REST OF FESTIVITIES. OTHER SENATORS, ESPECIALLY HOLLINGS, CONSIDERED STATEMENT A FIRM COMMITMENT.

2. ASSESSMENT OF SENATORS, IN WHICH I FULLY CONCUR, IS THAT SUPPORT OF RIBICOFF FOR F-15 SALE MAY WELL BE DECIDING FACTOR AND ELIMINATE A LOT OF QUESTIONS AND GRIEF WHEN PRESIDENT SUBMITS PROPOSAL.

3. TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS BREAKTHROUGH, RESPECTFULLY

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SUGGEST THAT UPON RIBICOFF'S RETURN, YOU, THE PRESIDENT OR BRZEZINSKI MAKE SPECIAL EFFORT TO CONTACT RIBICOFF GETTING A REPORT ON HIS VERSION OF THE TRIP AND IF POSSIBLE GETTING REAFFIRMATION OF HIS F-15 SUPPORT COMMITMENT. IF HE APPEARS TO BE WAVERING, SUGGEST CONSULTATION WITH SENATOR HOLLINGS ON HOW BEST TO APPROACH HIM.

4. SENATOR CANNON WAS PREVENTED BY SLIGHT ILLNESS FROM
ATTENDING MOST FUNCTIONS BUT ALL OTHERS, INCLUDING
RIBICOFF, STATED THAT THEY LEFT WITH NEW APPRECIATION OF
SAUDI POSITION AND NEW UNDERSTANDING OF NEEDS OF COUNTRY.
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